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ABSTRACT

This report examines the effectiveness of Texas' Centers for Professional Development of Teachers (CPDTs) in addressing diversity as part of educational excellence. The state board of education's five proficiencies for teachers provide the framework within which the report describes program characteristics. For each proficiency, the report examines progress by the CPDTs in addressing diversity, offering case examples. Proficiency 1, learner-centered knowledge, involves developing culturally responsive content, understanding culturally responsive pedagogy, and developing culturally responsive skills in technology. Proficiency 2, learner-centered instruction, involves planning and implementing culturally responsive instruction and assessing learning in culturally responsive classrooms. Proficiency 3, equity in excellence for all learners, requires the teacher to respond appropriately to diverse groups of learners. Proficiency 4, learner-centered communication, has teachers serve as advocates for all learners and demonstrate ethical and professional communication skills. Proficiency 5, learner-centered professional development, involves teachers demonstrating a commitment to learn, to improve the profession, and to maintain professional ethics and personal integrity. The five proficiencies for learner-centered schools promote the concept of learning as a lifelong process for teachers and students. (Contains 32 references.) (SM)

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ED 421 458

Restructuring Texas Teacher Education Series **6**

Cultural Pluralism

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CENTERS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

In 1991 the Texas Legislature passed legislation and authorized funding for the Centers for Professional Development of Teachers (CPDTs; originally called Centers for Professional Development and Technology). The CPDTs are designed to support collaboration among public schools, universities, regional education service centers, and other organizations to improve teacher preparation and professional development.

The purpose of the CPDTs is to totally restructure teacher education on the basis of six principles and goals:

- To restructure teacher preparation programs toward performance-centered, field-based models
- To institutionalize the new programs to include all prospective teachers for the long term, not just pilot groups for a short period
- To integrate technology into teacher preparation and to support its enhanced use in PreK–12 schools
- To prepare teachers to address the needs of culturally diverse student populations
- To extend collaboration among universities, schools, and others concerned with teacher preparation
- To establish staff development opportunities that better address the needs of all educators

In 1992 the state funded the first 8 CPDTs. By 1993 the number had increased to 14, and by 1997, to 30. The CPDTs now comprise 43 universities, 15 regional education service centers, and 113 school districts, affecting more than 300,000 students, 19,000 teachers, and 12,000 preservice teachers. The names and the locations of the CPDT universities appear on the inside back cover of this publication. The commitment by the state legislature has been significant, as indicated by the $46 million that it has provided to date.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This series of seven reports on restructuring teacher education in Texas was produced by representatives of seven CPDT institutions that received 1997–98 grants for Partnerships for Professional Development of Teachers. The series draws on experiences of all the CPDTs, including both successes and challenges.

The seven reports are as follows:

- Field-Based Teacher Education
- Professional Development Schools
- Connecting to Improve Methods Courses
- Assessment
- Distance Learning
- Cultural Pluralism
- Technology

Preparing Teachers for a Culturally Pluralistic Society

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INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, diversity characterizes the population of Texas, but public schools and teacher preparation institutions have not adequately met the resulting needs. Students at risk for success in life because of ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, or gender have been particularly underserved. Early in the 1990s, this reality sounded an alarm in public and private sectors throughout the state. In response, state policy makers launched unprecedented initiatives to raise the academic performance of all students in Texas.

Policy makers focused first on reform of public education through learner-centered schools. In the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) initiative, the state defined standards for all grades and subject areas. These standards form the basis for the curriculum in PreK–12 schools and for state testing of achievement in reading, mathematics, and writing through the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). TAAS has been revised, extended to include higher levels of cognition, and used as a major part of the accountability system in the state. On the basis of TAAS scores, the state rates schools as "exemplary," "recognized," "acceptable," or "not acceptable" and makes the results public. Community representatives serve on site-based decision-making committees in all schools. Through the TEKS standards and TAAS testing, the state is emphasizing individual needs and achievement of all students in restructured schools.

The second focus of reform was teacher preparation. To enhance quality and ensure equity in teacher preparation, the state implemented three initiatives. The first, begun in 1992, was the Centers for Professional Development of Teachers (CPDTs; originally called Centers for Professional Development and Technology). The state has invested millions of dollars in this initiative to restructure teacher education from traditional university- or college-based programs to programs conducted collaboratively with school districts. One requirement of the CPDTs is that they include low-performing schools in their partnerships, and all CPDT schools expect prospective teachers to work with students who are at risk.

The second initiative in teacher preparation emphasized the importance of quality professionals in learner-centered schools. In 1994 the state adopted five proficiencies to provide a framework for preparation

of school personnel (State Board of Education, 1995). Administrators, counselors, and prospective and practicing teachers are expected to demonstrate the broadly defined behaviors addressed in the proficiencies as they work in learner-centered schools. Also, prospective teachers must pass the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET) for initial certification. A portion of the ExCET measures an applicant's ability to work with diverse learners.

The third initiative focused on the accountability system for teacher preparation. In 1996 the State Board of Education issued a "report card" to each teacher preparation institution, listing passing rates of its graduates on ExCET as a group and by ethnicity and gender. The Accountability System for Educator Preparation identifies entities that do and do not meet state standards for accreditation and generates information to develop state policies for educator preparation. Soon after the turn of the century, the system will include the teaching effectiveness of graduates as well. For the first time, the state will hold teacher education programs accountable for the success of all their graduates.

This report examines the effectiveness of the CPDT in addressing diversity as a part of educational excellence. The five proficiencies for teachers (State Board of Education, 1995, pp. 3–8; see pp. 4, 9, 12, 14, and 17 of this report) provide the framework within which the report describes program practices.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND TEACHER PREPARATION

American society is increasingly becoming multicultural, resulting in a rich tapestry of ethnic and cultural diversity. In 1995, more than 40 percent of the Texas population was minority (28 percent Hispanic and 12.1 percent African-American) (Bureau of the Census, 1995). Hodgkinson (1992) predicts that by 2010, minority youth will predominate in Texas and 11 other states. Texas already has exceeded that projection. In 1996, Hispanic and African-American students made up 51 percent of school enrollments (36.7 percent Hispanic and 14.3 percent African-American) (Texas Education Agency, 1996a).

As linguistic and cultural diversity have significantly altered school populations in the United States, resulting in greater heterogeneity, the racial composition of the United States teaching force has remained virtually the same. People of color make up only 9.3 percent of that teaching force (National Education Association, 1997). In contrast, minorities constitute 34 percent of the student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995). In Texas, Hispanic teach-

ers make up 15 percent of the teaching force and African-American teachers 8.1 percent—proportions that are significantly lower than those of the respective student populations (Texas Education Agency, 1996b).

The standards of the State Board for Educator Certification require that each teacher preparation entity prepare teachers who can ensure equity in excellence among all learners. Although academic achievement is a goal of cognitive dimensions, building it on a student's individual and cultural strengths enhances the chances of its attainment.

Ethnic-minority students continue to close the performance gap on TAAS (Texas Education Agency, 1996b). At grades 4 and 8, they have made double-digit gains in mathematics. Further, on the 1994 and 1996 reading tests, scores of Hispanic students increased four points, and scores of African-American students, five points.

The CPDTs' teacher preparation programs play a key role in developing educators who are both cognizant of cultural differences and able to teach with a multicultural perspective. Preparation to teach in a pluralistic society results from authentic experiences and instruction that readies prospective teachers for real-world settings. Authentic preparation of teachers includes more than instruction about the interaction of culture and schooling. Ideally, working in real-world settings, prospective teachers learn to create climates of high expectations for all students; use a variety of student-centered instructional strategies, resources, and assessments; and demonstrate ways to teach from more than a single cultural orientation.

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PRINCIPLE-CENTERED PRACTICES IN TEACHER PREPARATION

Preparing teachers for a pluralistic society requires engagement in a variety of thoughtful processes, including extensive examination of the research literature on beliefs and attitudes that should frame a restructured preparation program. Replication of a patchwork of creative practices from programs around the state will not yield a congruent, principle-centered program.

The CPDT framework has created some common principles in teacher preparation. However, principles also are developed by the responsible teacher education entity, the schools in which a program is housed, and the surrounding community, so each program is unique. For that reason this report does not promote a single set of promising practices for preparing teachers to serve in a culturally pluralistic

society. Instead, it presents a sampling of practices that are linked to the state standards for teacher preparation and to ExCET themes. Preparation of teachers who can provide equity in excellence for all students requires that educators address the learner-centered agenda in each proficiency as well as in each dimension of programming.

Guiding this approach is a conviction that authentic change in teacher preparation will not occur until the beliefs that undergird policy and practice change. In *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Covey (1991) writes as follows:

> If we focus our attention on techniques, on specific practices, on "to do" lists, on present pressures, we might make some small improvements. But if we want to move ahead in a major way, we need to shift our paradigm and see the situation in a totally new way. (p. 175)

By chronicling the CPDTs' developments and accomplishments relating to diversity, this report illustrates how CPDT programs are striving for equity in excellence for all learners, using the five proficiencies for teachers as organizers.

Learner-Centered Knowledge

The teacher possesses and draws on a rich knowledge base of content, pedagogy, and technology to provide relevant and meaningful learning experiences for all students.

This principle promotes teachers' acquisition and use of extensive knowledge, effective pedagogy, and appropriate instructional technology in classrooms where students are learning content and skills. Prospective teachers experience implementation of this principle as university professors and practicing teachers model effective teaching and active learning. When prospective teachers perceive congruence between theory and practice, they are more likely to apply the learning in their classrooms.

Developing Culturally Responsive Content

A strong liberal arts background is vital to developing the knowledge to teach in a learner-centered school. This includes not only knowledge of subject matter but a deep sensitivity to cultural differences. To acquire this knowledge and sensitivity, during their freshman and sophomore years, prospective teachers at the University of Houston–Downtown take core courses in English and the social sciences from arts and science professors. Within this core they each take 9–15 hours of course work specifically designed to enhance their ap-

preciation of their own culture and their understanding of other cultures in greater Houston. These courses take into consideration the needs of all learners; provide information about the history and the culture of students from various ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds; impart content about the contributions of various groups to society; and deal with first- and second-language acquisition and effective teaching practices with students from homes where English proficiency is limited. Successful completion of the courses lays the foundation for instruction in various skills and abilities needed to teach all students, regardless of ethnicity or language background.

> *"CPDT personnel ask their students to be lifelong learners, teachers who are willing and able to draw on emerging knowledge and to engage in creating new knowledge."*

The knowledge base in the disciplines is not static but dynamic. Therefore CPDT personnel ask their students to be lifelong learners, teachers who are willing and able to draw on emerging knowledge and to engage in creating new knowledge. In the Texas Southern University CPDT, a new knowledge base is evolving through the Center for the Development and Study of Effective Pedagogy for African American Learners. The center works with a cadre of schools whose state ratings range from "exemplary" to "not acceptable." It offers professional development conferences and technical assistance to raise PreK–12 student achievement on campuses that fall below the rating of "recognized." A major intent of the center is to replicate in low-performing schools the success of high-performing schools.

Two major lessons from the center's work are that (1) professional development in multiculturalism raises teachers' expectations of urban students and (2) professional development in instructional technology increases student learning. As a result, the Texas Southern CPDT has integrated multicultural principles into professional development and instructional technology courses. Examples are high performance expectations for all students and high regard for all students, as demonstrated by the quality of interaction. Prospective teachers work in multiethnic teams to develop and refine their cross-cultural interaction skills. The teams challenge teacher candidates to leave their comfort zones and create new relationships across cultural lines. In cooperative-learning groups, they look for common ground, and they work through negative behaviors (e.g., stereotyping and exclusion) to preserve the developing esprit de corps. Their instructors expect them to demonstrate confidence and competence in cross-cultural communications and the capacity to examine issues from more than one viewpoint.

Through course work in pedagogy, prospective teachers at the University of Texas at El Paso gather data on the nine school communities served by their CPDT—who the students are and where the

> *A first language is critical to building a healthy self-concept and a positive attitude toward school and educational experiences. Equally important is understanding that support of children's native language plays a critical role in expanding their cognitive levels through the elementary school years.*

students come from—as they examine intersecting issues of culture, leadership, and diversity in curriculum. Using those data, prospective teachers discuss access, opportunity, and quality in education, especially as they pertain to greater El Paso.

Students in numerous communities in the El Paso area qualify for Title I assistance, and many come from homes in which English is not the first language. Low socioeconomic status and limited English proficiency hamper access to learning. Children of poverty do not enjoy the educational opportunities and experiences that children of middle and upper socioeconomic groups do. Further, if the language in which a school delivers its entire curriculum is new to a child, the child may not have an equal opportunity for education.

Dialogues in teacher preparation center on these issues. As part of their course work, prospective teachers must (1) conduct a community audit, (2) make three home visits, and (3) participate in the activities of parent centers. This gives them useful information to understand their students better and to bridge the gap between home and school. As a consequence, they can make curriculum and instruction more meaningful and purposeful, and ultimately they can enhance the chances for success of students from these communities. González and Maez (1995) assert the following:

> Children and their families constitute "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992) that represent essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, get ahead, or to thrive. By documenting what goes on in the child's environment, a network for accessing funds of knowledge is created. (p. 5)

A major issue in El Paso is first- and second-language acquisition. Many complex factors influence acquisition of a second language, especially a language used for instruction across the curriculum. Information gathered during community audits and home visits validates the importance of acquiring data on children's literacy and academic development in their home language and in English. A first language is critical to building a healthy self-concept and a positive attitude toward school and educational experiences. Equally important is understanding that support of children's native language plays a critical role in expanding their cognitive levels through the elementary school years (Collier, 1995a).

Understanding Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Effective education of linguistically and culturally diverse students demands that learner-centered instruction include a common set of assumptions and a knowledge-driven curriculum. According to García (1991), to succeed, the culturally and linguistically diverse learner requires that—

- the curriculum include all categories of learning goals (linguistic, cognitive, academic, social, and cultural) and opportunities for language use;
- there be a connection between academic content and the student's experiences and environment;
- there be an integrated and thematic curriculum in order to make the connections across disciplines;
- learning be more active; active learning supports opportunities for authentic communication that focuses on content and meaning, and not language as language;
- there be opportunities to apply new knowledge in meaningful contexts.

On the basis of such assumptions, at the University of Texas at El Paso, course work for prospective science and mathematics teachers focuses on integrated, hands-on, interactive activities that foster inquiry-based experiences related to real life and real environments. Prospective teachers spend time in "teaching hospital"–style schools. They regroup afterward in classes at the university to reflect on their experiences, discuss challenges, reassess situations, and articulate new goals for learners in the classroom.

In an introductory reading class at Texas Southern University, prospective teachers develop a working knowledge of the pedagogy of literacy, especially addressing characteristics of literacy in various cultures. Texas Southern's prospective teachers come from around the world—Africa, Asia, and North and South America. They describe their literacy development in autobiographies, which they share with colleagues in small and large groups. Not only do they learn different cultural and intellectual viewpoints; they hear colleagues' stories of early literacy training. This process helps build a supportive learning community. Further, the validation that flows from sharing experiences demonstrates that there is no single best approach to literacy development and that families employ a variety of approaches in building literacy.

As developing professionals, students also examine pedagogical information that will enhance their teaching effectiveness in urban classrooms. For example:

- Comprehensive research on common correlates of effective schools serving urban students, conducted by the Center for the Development and Study of Effective Pedagogy for African American Learners (Brooks, Jones, & Noiel, 1996)
- Etta Hollins's (1996) research on teaching African-American children to read, emphasizing that culture actually determines patterns of cognition
- D. Ross Gandy's (1990) study on the 20 keys to teaching Mexican children, responding directly to Mexican cultural attitudes toward learning
- Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) account of black and white families' home literacy practices, which she observed firsthand over 10 years in Appalachia (see also Heath & Mangiola, 1991)
- Ruby Payne's (1995) revelations on teaching children of poverty
- Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde's (1993) report of best practices in reaching Chicago's urban children

Housed in an ethnically diverse university, the program at the University of Houston–Downtown seeks to enhance the chances for academic success of at-risk children and adolescents. Building on knowledge gained through the program's urban education core and first professional course, Culture of the Urban School requires prospective teachers to become familiar with the communities in which at-risk youngsters live. Then, to gain an understanding of the needs of these youngsters, who come from varying backgrounds and speak different languages, prospective teachers must work for three semesters in predominantly minority schools. During this time they interact with children from different cultural groups, experience the culture of urban school settings, and develop a comprehension of educational theory on teaching inner-city children. They also conduct ethnographic studies and generate profiles of field-based schools. Their understanding of cultural differences develops further as they participate in "teacher tasks" in their professional development sequence. The tasks include interacting daily with children from differing cultural groups who speak a first language other than English.

Developing Culturally Responsive Skills in Technology

At the University of Texas at San Antonio, prospective teachers are assigned to a high school student identified as below grade level in

reading. The two work together each week on a children's book chosen by the high school student. Once a week, via interactive computer teleconferencing, the high school student reads to an elementary school student while being mentored by the university student. In this way, prospective teachers have an opportunity to work with students at different grade levels from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Students typically return to campus with knowledge based on practical experience and an excitement about their newly chosen profession.

At Texas Southern University, in an introductory language arts class, teacher candidates design, write, and conduct lessons using leading-edge instructional technology. They rely on Power Point and Smart Board software and draw on resources from the Internet. They repeat this kind of work in early field experiences, in student teaching, and in contract teaching assignments. In cooperative-learning groups, prospective teachers design thematic units from which they develop lessons. They then teach the lessons in university and school settings. Texas Southern faculty are assembling a collection of the lessons (on videotape) that demonstrate best teaching practices, for use in future classes.

"Language instruction in both the first and the second language of a child allows for development of English proficiency through a strong foundation in the first language."

Learner-Centered Instruction

To create a learner-centered community, the teacher collaboratively identifies needs; and plans, implements, and assesses instruction using technology and other resources.

Modifying instruction to accommodate a learner's knowledge, cognitive style, sensory preferences, and language skills affects achievement positively (Banks & Banks, 1993). Effective instruction capitalizes on each learner's strengths and accommodates differences without labeling the learner as deficient (Educational Research Service, 1991). Language instruction in both the first and the second language of a child, for example, allows for development of English proficiency through a strong foundation in the first language. As Collier (1995a) notes,

> When parents and children speak the language that they know best, they are working at their level of cognitive maturity . . . Continuing cognitive and academic development in [the] first language is considered to be a key variable for academic success in the second language. (p. 7)

Historically, teachers have experienced instructional swings in search of one right way to teach all students. Guild (1994) suggests that an understanding of culture makes this practice seem naive. If instructional decisions are learner centered and based on a knowledge of the learner's culture, then no single method will be best for all stu-

> *Instructors guide prospective teachers in using knowledge of a student's background to bridge the gap between what the student knows and what he or she needs to learn, at the same time viewing the student's experiences as legitimate knowledge.*

dents. Culturally sensitive methods result from using teaching techniques and environments that match the cultural, linguistic, and learning attributes of students. At the Texas Southern CPDT, prospective teachers plan instruction that incorporates culturally relevant activities—for example, developing family trees, learning the traditions of cultural groups in the classroom, and reading a multicultural book. Instructors guide prospective teachers in using knowledge of a student's background to bridge the gap between what the student knows and what he or she needs to learn, at the same time viewing the student's experiences as legitimate knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In short, culturally responsive instruction is comfortable for the students and the teacher, and it supports mastery of basic academic skills (Educational Research Service, 1991).

Planning and Implementing Culturally Responsive Instruction

Merging service learning with teaching in the community, teacher candidates at Huston-Tillotson College serve as trained cultural interpreters at the Jourdan Bachman Pioneer Farm, a living-history museum located northeast of Austin. For three hours on Wednesday mornings, costumed in bonnets, gingham dresses, overalls, suspenders, and high-top shoes, these interpreters greet 250 children from area public and private schools. The endeavor has two purposes: for teacher candidates, to explore science and social studies outside the four walls of the classroom; and for community children, to learn that African-Americans and Hispanic Americans have contributed significantly to building central Texas. In sharing the heritage, the teacher candidates demonstrate skills such as making rope, carding cotton, shucking corn, and milking cows that enabled African-American and Hispanic settlers to rise from tenant farmers to landowners. For some children, particularly those from home schools and private schools, this experience is their very first interaction with African-Americans and Hispanic Americans. For the teacher candidates, every Wednesday is a new opportunity for a direct experience in multiculturalism.

Following the model developed by Haberman (1991), the University of Houston–Downtown CPDT enables prospective urban teachers to participate during their junior and senior years in a 27-semester-hour field-based professional development sequence. For three semesters, prospective teachers work with a trained mentor teacher and low-performing, predominantly minority inner-city children. Faculty have structured the experience around the competencies tested on the Ex-CET. Semester 1 addresses factors that relate to understanding the minority learner and centers on the characteristics of constructivist teaching, developmental processes, and programs designed to meet the

needs of inner-city learners. Semester 2 emphasizes strategies that lead to achievement for all inner-city children, including developing and teaching mathematics and science lessons in elementary school classrooms, integrating multicultural literature into instruction through thematic units, and creating and piloting classroom and individual assessment tools. In semester 3, teacher candidates examine teaching and learning environments in urban schools and communities. They also learn to work with other teachers and administrators and to conduct community service projects in inner-city neighborhoods.

In all three semesters, prospective teachers shadow their mentors and observe their mentors' interactions with children, parents, and other teachers. They also attend parent meetings and parent-teacher conferences. Further, they instruct individual children or small groups of students. Other activities include working cooperatively with peers, teachers, and parents, many of whom come from cultures different than their own.

Course work is organized in a seminar format, which allows teacher candidates to reflect on educational theory and discuss issues of interest to them. Activities in the professional development sequence provide, as Haberman (1991) suggests, opportunities to develop, polish, and perfect skills in working with minority students. The prospective teachers gain critical skills by becoming actively involved in real-life situations.

Assessing Learning in a Culturally Responsive Classroom

Texas Southern University faculty teach the principle of learner-centered knowledge theoretically and authentically by modeling it. Prospective teachers use formal and informal inventories to gather information about school-age learners with whom they will work, initially during early field experiences and later during student teaching. Faculty expect them to demonstrate from their observations and data gathering that, as professionals, they can manipulate classroom variables to influence student achievement—for instance, by aligning instruction with students' learning styles.

Modeling this approach, faculty employ formal and informal assessments to gather information on prospective teachers' preferred sensory modes and cognitive learning styles. Faculty use this information to make classes more learner centered and to improve achievement. Prospective teachers develop a battery of "metacognitive skills"—that is, skills in learning how to learn. As they discover how they learn best, they apply strategies that support their uniqueness, thereby making the

most effective use of their study time. They also use these strategies when they study in groups. Moreover, through a "multiple intelligence inventory" [i.e., a survey of the various dimensions of intelligence—linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1993)], faculty discover new information about prospective teachers' talents. Acting on this information, prospective teachers and faculty members use a variety of teaching strategies that accommodate children's preferred sensory modes—auditory, visual, or kinesthetic—and cognitive styles—field independent or field sensitive.

Field-independent learners tend to be formal in interactions, task oriented, and analytical, and they demonstrate a preference for working alone. Field-sensitive learners tend to be less formal in interactions, people oriented, and more intuitive, and they enjoy working in groups. By merging behaviors associated with both orientations, learners become "bicognitive," thus increasing their probability for success. Using "think alouds" in small cooperative-learning groups and in large groups, prospective teachers learn new approaches to problem solving. As they experience the benefits of learning in two cognitive styles, they are more likely to see the value of supporting the use of these skills with their students. Effective instruction capitalizes on each learner's strengths while viewing cultural ways of learning as resources that facilitate achievement (Educational Research Service, 1991).

As coaches, Texas Southern instructors observe, evaluate, and modify strategies to capture the strengths of prospective teachers, often using technology. For example, in cooperative-learning groups, prospective teachers design, write, and deliver mini reading lessons using slide shows and the Smart Board. These group efforts build on their socialization and oral presentation strengths. Discussions are an integral part of each class session because literacy development relies on oral language.

Equity in Excellence for All Learners

The teacher responds appropriately to diverse groups of learners.

Equity in excellence for all learners is grounded in the belief that educators should hold all students to high expectations and ensure that appropriate learning conditions are present to address differences in language, culture, and socioeconomic status. Practices at every level of education affect the quality of academic opportunity for students.

To understand the barriers to educational equality faced by low-income, linguistically and culturally diverse students, it is important to

understand how social class and ethnicity interact with language and culture:

> Children identified as slow learners, learning disabled, and limited English speakers are largely the children of minority groups, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, children who are bilingual, or children who speak English as a second language. (Flores, Cousin, & Diaz, 1991)

This observation is of particular importance in Texas, which is home to half a million English-language learners (Texas Education Agency, 1996b). English-language learners face two major challenges: (1) they must become fully literate in English and (2) they must master all academic content required of them. In districts where bilingualism is a goal, students learn English while they learn academic content in their own language. However, the more common practice is monolingualism—English proficiency alone. Research in the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students indicates that, when the goal is English proficiency, children are not exposed to the same academic content (Collier, 1995b; García, 1991). As a result, children learn English at the expense of their education.

Through TEKS and TAAS, the state emphasizes the individual needs and achievement of all students. Learner-centered education calls for alternative forms of assessment if the intent is to achieve and measure academic progress. This is especially essential for linguistically and culturally diverse students learning English (Collier, 1995b; Cummins, 1991; García, 1991). Each child brings cognition, language, and culture into the classroom. Equity means that the teacher builds on that combination of interdependent elements to nourish and support the child's educational success.

At the University of Texas at El Paso, reform has included joining John Goodlad's National Network for Educational Renewal. Faculty began "conversations" on diversity, equity, and excellence with key community leaders, teachers, and school administrators. These were particularly beneficial because many El Paso communities are characterized by geographic isolation, low-income families, and limited English proficiency. The conversations have resulted in a rethinking of teacher preparation. The restructured program focuses on (1) empowering parents by engaging them in the education of their children; (2) providing a field-based model of teacher preparation that centers on the community; and (3) preparing teachers to engage communities where traditional parent programs have not reached those who need it most.

"Each child brings cognition, language, and culture into the classroom. Equity means that the teacher builds on that combination of interdependent elements to nourish and support the child's educational success."

> ***"Prospective teachers serve in designated communities, at public libraries, in tutoring sessions, at local schools, and at churches in order to understand themselves, their immediate communities, and even their global societies better."***

In the prior discussion of proficiencies, the focus was on the establishment of parent centers, a clinical approach to field-based teacher preparation, and the content and teaching needed in the El Paso community. On the equity in excellence proficiency, the focus is on establishing a knowledge base and a deeper understanding about language, culture, and learning.

Texas Southern University bases its restructured field-based teacher preparation program on 180 clock hours for professional development courses, 30 clock hours for field experiences in reading, and extensive involvement of university students in school and community experiences (Lara, Erickson, & Rosado, 1997). Prospective teachers serve in designated communities, at public libraries, in tutoring sessions, at local schools, and at churches in order to understand themselves, their immediate communities, and even their global societies better. For example, prospective teachers volunteer for literacy tutoring in their communities, receiving training and materials from the university's Department of Curriculum and Instruction. For another example, prospective teachers participate in the African-American Read-In Chain, which reaches more than 2,000 children around the city. By reading aloud to urban children, prospective teachers refine their oral reading skills while providing strong models as lovers of reading. Early feedback from Texas Southern students shows that they routinely incorporate "read-alouds" into instruction.

Learner-Centered Communication

While acting as an advocate for all students and the school, the teacher demonstrates effective professional and interpersonal communication skills.

Wittmer (1992) suggests that sensitivity to others and willingness to understand them are keys to effective communication in a culturally pluralistic world. Prospective teachers must be aware of the thoughts and the feelings of others, regardless of race, creed, or culture. Becoming a culturally sensitive communicator is an important task for any teacher. Teachers begin by developing an awareness of their own cultural perspective, thus gaining insight into the assumptions underlying their own expectations, beliefs, and behaviors (Chisholm, 1994). They learn not to assume that people ought to be or want to be as they are (Wittmer, 1992). Banks (1994) suggests that an important first step for learners is to understand their own cultures and participate effectively in their own ethnic and cultural communities. The same is true for teachers. Therefore teachers of diverse groups of learners should establish positive ties between the school and the community at large, com-

municate the mission of the school, demonstrate sensitivity to the concerns that affect learners both inside and outside the school, identify community strengths, and secure resources to enhance learners' welfare (State Board of Education, 1995).

Serving as Advocates for All Learners

At Texas A & M University, more than 150 teacher education students spent a semester in the Family Literacy Program of Bryan Independent School District, working with about 240 families of low socioeconomic status and limited English proficiency. The experience was part of their class Reading for Diverse Learners, in which they received training in multicultural sensitivity and use of a variety of reading instructional materials. In a true "win-win" situation, the Texas A & M students developed an understanding of the problems and issues facing children from low-income families. They also learned how to address the unique literacy needs of those children by developing reading materials reflecting the children's culture. As a result, the children in the Family Literacy Program show improved literacy skills.

A second Texas A & M program empowering prospective teachers to become advocates for all learners is the Family Community Empowerment Project, which targets young children and their families (mainly single parents) in a public housing project in College Station. Texas A & M students with early childhood or reading specializations work at the complex as on-site tutors, developing literacy skills among the children and helping parents acquire skills to improve their children's academic achievement. These prospective teachers use activities to build self-esteem in working with the children. The success of this program is evident in significantly improved literacy skills of children and in the enrollment of some parents in nearby Blinn College.

In a similar initiative at the Texas Southern CPDT in Houston, a cross-section of university students, including prospective teachers, function as home-based tutors for students enrolled in the Texas Southern/Houston Independent School District Laboratory School. Following 36 clock hours of training, prospective teachers invest 10 hours per week tutoring students. Because parents are present during the tutorials, they gain or refine skills to support their children's school success. Although targeted at school-age learners, the program has benefited all who are involved. For instance, some parents who have taken advantage of collaborative tutoring and other parent education opportunities will be completing GED programs or entering Texas Southern as first-year students during the summer and fall semesters.

> *"Texas Southern faculty regularly challenge prospective teachers to reflect on their biases, and faculty create cross-ethnic group assignments that support use of cross-cultural interaction skills."*

Demonstrating Ethical and Professional Communication Skills

To enhance their understanding of self and others, prospective teachers at the University of Texas at San Antonio work with students in predominantly minority schools, among them Sam Houston High and Hutchins Elementary. For example, in two university courses, The Secondary School and Reading in the Content Areas, prospective teachers meet on the Sam Houston High campus and are engaged in reform of the site-based secondary education block. As part of their course requirements, prospective teachers develop a personal philosophy of race, class, and gender.

Teachers' perceptions can be powerful in shaping their interaction with students. To develop productive perceptions of students among teacher candidates, Texas Southern faculty integrate research information and literature about people from various ethnic and cultural groups into selected readings, case studies, and discussions. Prospective teachers examine their perceptions of themselves and others to determine if these perceptions inhibit or enhance communication. Building prospective teachers' competence in intercultural communication is an open not a hidden agenda.

Texas Southern faculty regularly challenge prospective teachers to reflect on their biases, and faculty create cross-ethnic group assignments that support use of cross-cultural interaction skills. The challenge begins in the Instructional Technology course during the sophomore year. To sensitize themselves to interaction among students, prospective teachers create a sociogram on which they diagram the social patterns in a class. Instructors discuss the results of the sociogram while maintaining the confidentiality of the students involved. Prospective teachers use the data to help isolated students become more active, to limit star students' involvement in leadership roles, and to reduce the incidence of prejudicial exchanges among students of different ethnic groups and nationalities. These competencies are directly related to the state's learner-centered proficiencies and to the tasks associated with teaching. To extend students' thinking along these lines, university instructors support sharpening skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing.

A key to improving student achievement is fostering communication between parents and teachers, home and school. At partnership schools of the University of Texas at El Paso, traditional parent-teacher relationships have been examined, and parents, teachers, and administrators in these schools are redefining their roles in relation to the

classroom, the school, and the community. This has helped open the lines of communication. One result has been the commitment of space for centers staffed and operated by parents for parents. Parents decide what they need in these centers. They have initiated training and workshop sessions in computer literacy, parenting, English as a second language, and supporting their children's academic achievement.

The success of these centers is a result of the collaboration between the school communities and the university. Schools have provided the space; the university has provided the technology and the graduate students to offer training and technical assistance. Meanwhile, prospective teachers have studied the community and made home visits, gathering valuable information about students and parents. In the process they have developed some of the cross-cultural communication skills needed to build a bridge between home and school.

Learner-Centered Professional Development

The teacher, as a reflective practitioner dedicated to all students' success, demonstrates a commitment to learn, to improve the profession, and to maintain professional ethics and personal integrity.

Banks (as cited in Lockwood, 1994) describes the changes that teachers undergo as they successfully implement a multicultural curriculum. First, they examine their ideologies about the United States. Then they learn about the culture and the history of various other nations. Finally, they gain a knowledge of the cultural characteristics of diverse groups in order to generate questions about the United States experience. To do this, teachers (1) learn about the nature of knowledge—that knowledge (development) is a process; (2) acquire skills for teaching ethnic content and working with multicultural populations; (3) allow new knowledge to become a vehicle through which they can examine their own attitudes; and (4) examine their own ethnic and cultural history and their own ethnic journeys (Banks, 1994).

Culturally responsive preservice and inservice training is vitally important if teachers are to provide exemplary learning experiences for all students. In this context the principle of learner-centered professional development requires teachers of diverse learners to engage in an exchange of ideas with colleagues, observe peers, and encourage feedback from learners; to make daily decisions based on the highest ethical principles; to see themselves as advocates for all children; and to identify and use community resources and school services related to teachers' responsibilities and students' rights (State Board of Education, 1995).

"'Queremos Triunfar' is a transitional year-round bilingual program that employs a train-the-trainer concept. Faculty trained an initial group of 20 teachers using a program that integrated language arts and mathematics. In turn, this group has held workshops and trained about 300 teachers to date."

Becoming a Practitioner Dedicated to Success for All Students

Supported by the teacher education program at Texas A & M University, *Queremos Triunfar* is a transitional year-round bilingual program employing a train-the-trainer concept. Faculty trained an initial group of 20 teachers using a program that integrated language arts and mathematics. In turn, this group has trained about 300 teachers to date. As a result, in the Aldine Independent School District, more than 750 elementary school students with limited English proficiency have used the integrated program. Students in the program have shown gains in scores on standardized language and mathematics tests.

Another component of *Queremos Triunfar* is a family literacy program. On 10 Saturdays each semester, an average of 45 parents and their children attend three-hour classes in literacy and English as a second language. The children are taught through music, play, and read-alouds. Parents use culturally relevant instructional materials and engage in basic computer training to improve their English skills. Parents in the program report improved relationships with their children and improved economic status.

A second Texas A & M effort, *Estamos Listos*, is a summer program that has trained 48 teachers and teaching assistants from the Spring Branch Independent School District. The program has developed a four-dimensional transitional pedagogical model for training in bilingual education. The teachers also have received training in mathematics, reading, writing, building self-esteem, developing real-world curriculum, and use of technology. As a result, over a three-year period, more than 600 low-achieving Hispanic fifth graders with limited English proficiency have made significant gains in mathematics and reading and have shown improved reading comprehension and problem-solving skills.

Exemplifying High-Level Professionalism

To be effective teachers of urban, high-risk students requires more than an understanding of content and methodology. According to Haberman (1991), new urban teachers also must be able to reflect on their lives and how they have come to believe and feel as they do. At the University of Houston–Downtown, faculty are helping prospective urban teachers become reflective learners. From the beginning of the field-based professional development blocks, students E-mail entries from reflective journals to their professors. Through E-mail, university professors converse with prospective teachers about their feelings related to field-based experiences and ask them to evaluate their own teaching. Sometimes this requires that they review videotapes of their teach-

ing. At other times it involves a subjective post-teaching review. Class discussions also help prospective teachers become reflective learners.

CONCLUSION

The CPDTs and the five learner-centered proficiencies have created a new paradigm for teacher preparation in an increasingly pluralistic society. The efficacy of the CPDT will continue to be studied in the coming decades.

As the 21st century approaches, schools and communities across Texas are rethinking PreK–12 education with new determination. As schools become more diverse, all teachers must have more responsibility for the academic and social development of diverse student populations. Teachers need more than a set of techniques for use in classrooms. They need a framework for instructional practices and working conditions that meet the needs of students. Collaborative practices focus on teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and others working as equal partners to create challenging learning environments in diverse classrooms.

The aspects of preservice education examined in this report reflect team-based approaches to instruction and provide models through which direct experiences result in creative classroom environments. By implementing continuous reflection through which prospective teachers learn new information and engage in introspection, CPDT personnel have accomplished a transformation to learner-centeredness. Teacher educators are examining their curricula to ensure that they provide all teachers with the knowledge and the skills necessary to address the diversity of students in classrooms.

The current learner-centered initiatives have begun to produce increases in student learning. To extend these gains, legislative and financial support must continue. Ideally, future plans will include long-term funding and expanded implementation.

The promising practices presented are characterized by prospective teachers experiencing the kind of training and instruction that they are encouraged to practice: learning by doing, collaborating, dialoguing on relevant content, and practicing individual and collective reflection. The five teacher proficiencies developed for learner-centered schools promote the concept of learning as a lifelong process for teachers and students. Lifelong learning provides a better understanding of and responsibility toward the world. Learning is a journey, not a destination.

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